

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) was joined by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at the State Department on Wednesday to officially unveil a Civilian Response Corps intended to help stabilize and rebuild parts of the world facing conflict and distress. The rapid-response team introduced Wednesday afternoon is the first of two groups included in a bill written by Rep. Farr.

Rep. Farr's legislation to formally codify this capacity is stalled in the Senate, but the initiative received federal funding in June and is supported by the administration. Rep. Farr's bill, the "Reconstruction and Stabilization Civilian Management Act," would authorize the president to provide assistance to support countries and regions facing conflict or civil strife.

"Our military has unfortunately been forced to take on many roles it is not suited for, from diplomat to nation-building. This Civilian Response Corps will shift the burden of stabilization and reconstruction to civilian experts, where it should have rested all along," Rep. Farr said. "USAID and the State Department don't have the resources they need, and this response corps will go a long way toward restoring their capabilities."

The Civilian Response Corps launched Wednesday will be composed of a rapid-response team of civilian experts in diplomacy, health, finance, engineering and other vital fields necessary to stabilize countries at risk and help rebuild shattered nations. That team is the first step toward creating a two-tier effort, which will eventually include a reserve corps made up of state and local experts.

"Stabilization and reconstruction is a mission that civilians must lead," Sec. Rice said Wednesday afternoon at the official rollout in Washington. "But for too long, our civilians have not had the capacity to lead, and investments were not made to prepare them to lead."

The 2008 supplemental appropriations bill included up to \$75 million to begin rolling out the active and standby components. The final composition of the groups is flexible, but the rapid-response team is expected to include 250 active members, the standby team another 2,000 members, and the reserve component another 2,000 volunteers from state and local governments.

#